Churchill as peacemaker

Edited by
JAMES W. MULLER

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Introduction

JAMES W. MULLER

In the first chapter of his *History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, Winston Churchill quotes the observations of Britannia collected by Julius Caesar in 55 B.C. before he invaded the island. "All the Britons," he was told, "dye their bodies with woad"—a dye prepared by powdering and fermenting the leaves of the plant *Isatis tinctoria*—"which produces a blue colour, and this gives them a more terrifying appearance in battle."[1] Over the centuries, the ancient custom fell into desuetude as dyers learned to substitute indigo for woad, and Britons left off using war paint. Modern denizens of the island, who count themselves the most peaceable and civilized of peoples, might be distressed to read that their forebears painted themselves blue like savage warriors from some unsettled corner of the globe. But underneath his tasteful garb of dark suits and polka-dot bow ties, one can imagine Churchill's delight in discovering his ancestors' martial caparison. For he had a lifelong fascination with war, and to his fellow citizens he often appeared, in spirit at least, to be wearing war paint.

Churchill tells us in his autobiography that his "earliest coherent memory" was of riflemen in Dublin's Phoenix Park, and his interest in war went back to the days when he ranged his lead soldiers on the nursery floor. On the strength of this attraction, or for want of other aptitude that he could discern, Winston's father, Lord Randolph Churchill, steered him toward a career at arms. After several years in the army class at Harrow School, Winston was admitted to the military academy at Sandhurst. There for the first time he thoroughly enjoyed his studies, and he began his adult life in 1895 as a cavalry officer. Late that year he made a private visit to Cuba, where, in the company of Spanish officers trying to suppress an insurrection, he celebrated his twenty-first birthday on 30 November by coming under fire for the first time. His service in the armies of Queen Victoria was brief and eventful. Conjuring himself with great resourcefulness to one battlefield after another, in the waning years of the nineteenth

[1] Winston S. Churchill, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, 4 vols. (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1956–8), vol. 1, 14.

century he saw action successively on India's northwest frontier, in the Sudan, and in South Africa.[2]

Although his soldiering was cut short by his election to the House of Commons in 1900 after his famous escape from a Boer prison in Pretoria, Churchill was intimately involved with Britain's twentieth-century wars. For three years before the First World War, as first lord of the Admiralty, he prepared the Royal Navy for its contest with Germany. During the war, after falling from favor in the midst of the attack on the Dardanelles, he returned to active service as a colonel on the western front; then, in the last years of the war and immediately afterward, he served first as minister of munitions and later as secretary of state for war, with responsibility for the air as well. In the 1930s, as a nettlesome independent critic of the Conservative governments of Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain, Churchill warned of the insufficiency of British preparations against the threat from Nazi Germany; in his wartime prime ministry, from 1940 to 1945, he closely supervised the campaign against Germany in his role as minister of defense. Whatever our judgment of his handling of military matters during the Second World War—and it remains a question of lively dispute among scholars—Churchill cannot be accused of neglecting them. Thus, as Robert Rhodes James remarks in Chapter 1 of this book, Churchill is often considered "principally as a man of war."

That impression is sharpened by our suspicion that Churchill's experience of war was not only extensive and unapologetic: It was also too eagerly pursued, too gamely embraced, too warmly remembered. As Churchill himself recognized in *Thoughts and Adventures*, a book of essays published during the interwar years, when war entails mass slaughter or catastrophic explosion, it is hard to find any nobility in it. By the end of the twentieth century, the spirited part of human nature has been so stigmatized as to make us condemn any such exuberance as aggression. If anything provokes us to rise up and make common cause against a dangerous heresy, it is a man who is overly fond of war.

Even the Second World War, which used to be held up as the archetypical good war against the muddled legacy of Vietnam, has now come under attack from revisionists of many stripes, working from many angles to show something more like a moral equivalency between the Axis and the Allies. In recent years, some on the right in Britain have claimed that

[2] Winston S. Churchill, *My Early Life* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1930), 15, 33–4, 57–9, 97 et seq.

their country would have fared better if Churchill had been more accommodating to Hitler, while in America some on the left have claimed that their country should have been more accommodating toward Japan. What the two plaints share is their anti-Americanism. Both are far-fetched, and neither commands support from the public, who, like the French singer Edith Piaf, frankly has no regrets. Yet, although revisionism has failed to persuade Britons or Americans to stop thinking that their side was right, in a sense the two peoples have experienced a revision of spirit in the years since 1945. Only half a century later, the Second World War seems to belong to a bygone era. One example suggests the divergence of views between our statesmen and those who guided the Allies in that war: In his memoirs, Churchill takes it for granted that the requirements for military success should come before the safety of Allied civilians if the two came into conflict—that it would be ignoble to act otherwise.[3] Perhaps we should reconsider his point of view, but it is hard to imagine British or American statesmen taking that for granted today.

Although Churchill was unquestionably a man of war—as attested by the biographies and monographs that have not ceased to multiply, including this one—he was also a man of peace. He was disappointed in 1953 to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature rather than for Peace. Yet throughout his long career as a writer and statesman, beginning before the turn of the century and continuing until he retired in the mid-1950s, Churchill was as intimately involved in making peace as he was in making war.

This book was written by scholars from England, Scotland, South Africa, and the United States, trained in different disciplines and approaching their subjects with various points of view, but united by a common resolve to explore this neglected side of Churchill's life and public career: Churchill as peacemaker. Their research draws not only on published works ranging from academic monographs to political memoirs but also on interviews, personal reminiscences, and archival materials from several continents.

The first two chapters provide an overview of Churchill's peacemaking. In his unflinching first chapter, informed by his knowledge of Winston Churchill as fellow parliamentarian and biographer of Lord Randolph Churchill, Robert Rhodes James assesses Winston Churchill's reputation by presenting him as an enigma—a man both for war and for peace. In

[3] Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, 6 vols. (London: The Reprint Society, 1950–4), vol. 6, 30, 51–2.

Chapter 2, Manfred Weidhorn, an American professor of English, surveys and interprets Churchill's career as a peacemaker, rejecting popular misconceptions to conclude that he was neither a warmonger nor a pacifist.

The next three chapters focus primarily on Churchill's reflections on peacemaking in the Victorian era but raise questions about war and peace that persisted well into the twentieth century. In Chapter 3, the American political scientist Kirk Emmert explores a question that interested Churchill from the days of Queen Victoria to the postwar era: What can imperial rule contribute to the peace and happiness of the world? Two succeeding chapters take up Churchill's reflections on peacemaking after British colonial wars. In Chapter 4, the American historian Paul A. Rahe examines Churchill's reflections on the British reconquest of the Sudan in *The River War* (1899), encompassing both his confidence in the justice of that endeavor and his doubts about the intentions of those who guided it. In Chapter 5, the South African historian S. Burridge Spies carefully unfolds Churchill's part in the dilemmas of restoring peace to Britons, Boers, and the indigenous peoples of his country after the South African War.

Chapter 6, written by the editor of this book, addresses the problems of making peace after the First World War, concentrating on Churchill's critique of Woodrow Wilson's idealistic peacemaking. The two chapters that follow describe the difficulties of reaching a settlement in two intractable disputes. In Chapter 7, the British historian Paul Addison considers the successes and failures of Churchill's attempt to bring peace to Ireland, particularly in the years leading up to the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1922. In Chapter 8, the American attorney and writer Douglas J. Feith gauges Churchill's bona fides as a Zionist and describes his part in the Palestinian settlement after the First World War.

Two final chapters investigate Churchill's understanding of peace and war in the twentieth century, first from a theoretical and then from a practical perspective; taken together, they demonstrate that he straddled the conventional opposition between hawks and doves. Chapter 9, by the American political scientist Patrick J. C. Powers, studies Churchill's advice in the philosophical essays of *Thoughts and Adventures* on how to bring peace both to modern democracies and to the statesman's soul. Chapter 10, by Churchill's official biographer, the British historian Martin Gilbert, recounts the hardihood and tenacity of Churchill's quest for a colloquy with the Soviets in the decade after the Second World War.

With their multiplicity of subjects and approaches, it is not surprising that these authors draw different conclusions about Churchill, offering

the reader divergent interpretations and sometimes outright disagreement. Yet there is also a common theme, which may serve to introduce our collective portrait of Churchill as peacemaker. Modern theorists of diplomacy, strategy, or international relations tend to fall into two camps: the warlike realists, for whom moral considerations play a distant second fiddle to the demands of *Realpolitik*, and the peace-loving moralists, who insist on cleaving to moral principles without regard for circumstances or consequences. Modern practitioners—who are usually less single-minded about their own interests than the realists, but also less oblivious of them than the moralists—fall into these camps less neatly; yet often, under the influence of theoretical counselors, they understand their own activity chiefly in terms of one or the other of these positions.

Churchill rejects them both. As these chapters attest, he is unwilling to embrace the unbending formulas or the idealistic confidence of the moralists, judging them too simplistic for actual political situations; nor does he inhabit the bleak world of the realists, whose indifference to ethics strikes him as practically inhuman. Neither peace nor war is always the right choice. Self-respect might prove a better guide in politics than a doctrinaire self-absorption or self-denial; it might draw our attention to the human things, prized by Churchill but neglected by realists and moralists alike, that matter so much in politics: friendship, conversation, and honor. After all, neither realism nor moralism teaches us to enjoy the company of other men—but Churchill did, both in war and in peace.

1

The enigma

ROBERT RHODES JAMES

The quandary of Winston Churchill may be simply expressed: There were so many Winston Churchills. This baffled his contemporaries and often inspired their mistrust; it has caused historians and his biographers comparable problems.

Let us survey this phenomenon. Politician, sportsman, artist, orator, historian, parliamentarian, journalist, essayist, gambler, soldier, war correspondent, adventurer, patriot, internationalist, dreamer, pragmatist, strategist, Zionist, imperialist, monarchist, democrat, egocentric, hedonist, romantic—the list seems endless. Churchill was also impulsive, hard, inspirational, infuriating. Did anyone, apart from his wife, ever really know him? What kept him going at such an amazing pace for so long? What was his mainspring? Why did he have so few real friends? Why was he so solitary a figure?

We are confronted with a daunting series of questions, and few satisfactory answers, but the quest for them remains one of the most intriguing ones in modern historiography. Most great men tend to diminish in stature as time passes and new perspectives lead to new evaluations; in Churchill's case the sheer complexity of his personality, and the fact that he touched almost every known aspect of life, makes him look increasingly formidable and mysterious.

This is not, of course, the universal view. One conspicuous feature of the current wave of denigratory portraits in Britain is that they are all written by young men of somewhat limited horizons with no personal political experience; also, none of them has even seen Churchill in person, let alone met him. Of course, this is not essential for a biographer, but in my view it helps. And for those of us who were alive in 1940—and what a year it was to be alive in England—there is an imperishable emotion of

gratitude and affection that inevitably colors our view of him. This has never made me uncritical of him, but my criticism is tinged with awe at the magnitude of his scale and achievements—at that ferocious energy and zest for life. He is just too big for us to comprehend.

My former boss at the foreign office, Lord Carrington, as usual expressed the feelings of the 1940 vintage perfectly:

> I remember in the summer of 1940, guarding three and a half miles of beach between Hythe and Folkestone, with 48 Guardsmen, 46 rifles, two Bren Guns and my pistol and reflecting with great sympathy on the appalling fate of any German division which landed on my beach. We were, of course, very naïve and no doubt stupid, but morale and leadership plays an enormous part in our attitudes, and nobody who was alive at the time can ever forget the effect of Winston Churchill—his presence, his manner, his speeches, his determination and his courage, and what a decisive effect it had on all of us.[1]

Here, I should emphasize that there is nothing wrong with serious historical revisionism; perspectives change, new evidence emerges, and hindsight has its virtues as well as its perils. It was only relatively recently, for example, that we became aware of the crucial role played in the Second World War by the cryptologists at Bletchley in their unraveling of the secrets of the German codes. Indeed, the enormous and still growing literature on that war still produces surprises—some quite small, it is true, but constantly changing our perceptions. The brutality of the Wehrmacht has astonished researchers given access to the records captured by the Russians and only recently made available to Western scholars. Also, Churchill's own war memoirs have been critically reassessed, and the necessary correctives applied.[2]

Inevitably, assessments of individuals will alter, and not usually to the advantage of their reputations. But there is a considerable difference between this and character assassination.

It is true that what Sir Michael Howard has described as "Churchillmania"—especially in the United States—went too far, and it may be that I unwittingly started a more realistic approach in my study of his career up to 1939 that was published in 1970; I subtitled it "A Study in Failure," which gave some people, who had only read the title, the idea that this

[1] Lecture, Royal United Service Institution, April 1995.

[2] See inter alia, Robin Edmonds, *The Big Three: Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1991) and Robert Blake and Roger Louis, eds., *Churchill* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993; rpt. 1994).

was the first denigratory biography of the great man.[3] Of course, it was not, as Lady Churchill and other members of the family quickly realized and appreciated. It was an attempt to regard him as an historical rather than a contemporary figure—which was why it ended in 1939—and as a fallible human being of great gifts and qualities but also of erratic judgment and weakness. But we have gone from Churchillmania to something like Churchillphobia, of whose exponents David Irving is the most sinister and Clive Ponting the most ludicrous.

In my case, also, I am biased in that Churchill was immensely kind to me as a very young man. As an Oxford undergraduate I had formulated the daring plan of writing the biography of his father, Lord Randolph; Churchill, the first—and indeed only—biographer of his father, was not at all encouraging. When it was published,[4] when I was twenty-six, there was general astonishment at the sheer cheek of it all, but when Churchill read it he made it widely known that he thought very well of it, and wrote me a letter of glowing congratulations. Beaverbrook invited me to Cherkley, and Lord Rosebery to Mentmore, with the request that I write a biography of Rosebery's father. Churchill himself arranged for family papers to be brought from Chartwell to his London house for me to study under congenial circumstances in Hyde Park Gate. When in 1962 the Turkish authorities refused me permission to visit the Gallipoli battlefields, then a closely guarded military zone, I obtained a letter from his private secretary, Anthony Montague Browne, seeking the ruling to be reversed. Naturally, it was, and quickly. I was to be one of the ushers at his funeral, but the imminent birth of our youngest daughter prevented this.

I would not claim that I knew him, but from my earliest political memories he was the dominant personality in my life—my prime minister, my party leader, my hero. My father took me to Blenheim in 1946 to a great Conservative rally, where I beheld Churchill in the distance on a platform, orating to a vast audience. That was my first sight of him, at the age of thirteen. I saw him at rather closer range in action in the House of Commons in his glorious Indian summer between 1951 and 1955, and then frequently during his nine years as a silent, and eventually stricken, backbencher, when I was a clerk of the House of Commons. Indeed, on the day he left the chamber for the last time it was I who opened the great

[3] Robert Rhodes James, *Churchill: A Study in Failure, 1900–1939* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970; rpt. 1994).

[4] Robert Rhodes James, *Lord Randolph Churchill* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1959; rpt. 1995).

doors for him and helped him into his wheelchair. By then the great frame had shrunk, and the eyes looked lifeless, but this was no husk of a man.

Even in his last years as a member of Parliament, Churchill's mere arrival in the chamber caused excitement. Visitors in the public galleries would be galvanized, and a buzz could almost be felt in the House itself. Labour members who had booed and jeered him, and on occasion actually shouted him down, rushed to welcome him; when he rose to leave there was almost a sigh of disappointment. "He may not utter a word," as Woodrow Wyatt wrote in April 1954,

> yet as long as he sits on the bench, the great head moving round, the face animated or so lifeless that it has the quality of a bust worn by time, the charged temper of the atmosphere is sustained. Every gesture, every move of hand to ear, is significant. When he gets up to go, something of the vitality of the House goes with him. It settles down to a quieter jog, like a reception after the champagne is finished.[5]

Here was grandeur, and what would now be called "charisma." Here was a political star, even in extreme old age. It was magical. Perhaps there is some harm for a biographer to have fallen under "the wand of the magician," but not much, because I have always seen him as a fascinating, but very imperfect, human being, and not a wholly attractive one.

Few ultimately successful political careers were for so long so bitterly controversial. Many considered that he had no principles at all, and was an adventurer and a charlatan, the man who had broken his parole with the Boers and then made himself a national hero by escaping; the Conservative who had ratted on his party when it was disintegrating and suddenly declared himself a Liberal—only to return to the Conservatives twenty years later when the Liberals themselves disintegrated; imperious, reckless with other men's lives, it was claimed, he was held responsible for the loss of much of the Royal Naval Division ("Winston's private army") at Antwerp in 1914, for the tragedy of Gallipoli in 1915, and the hapless British intervention in the Russian civil war from 1919 to 1921. Indeed, there were few British misfortunes in the first two decades of the twentieth century that were not in part blamed on him. There was, of course, much injustice and malice in this, but politics can be a harsh and unforgiving calling. The remarkable thing was that he kept bouncing back after reverses that would have destroyed most men both in their reputations and in their personal self-confidence.

[5] Woodrow Wyatt, "Churchill as Parliamentarian," *Encounter* 2, no. 4 (April 1954), 5–13.

As Desmond Morton, who for a time knew him particularly well, has written, Churchill had few real friends, and had an unattractive habit of discarding people when they ceased to be useful to him or had become an embarrassment.[6] Morton was one of them, but so were many others.

Perhaps there is validity in the comment of his onetime ally and supporter, Bob Boothby, another discard: "Winston was a sh—, but we needed a sh— to defeat Hitler."[7] Alan Brooke was not the only colleague who found him insufferable, arrogant, selfish, impulsive, often outrageously rude, and intolerant; others close to him, like Jock Colville, although often infuriated by his whims and orders, adored him and would have died for him. As Colville, at first a vehement critic and later an almost—but not entirely—total admirer, later wrote: "Few public figures in all history have assumed so many mantles, displayed such an unlikely mixture of talents, experienced over so wide a span of years such a variety of triumphs and disasters, and been successively so suspected and so trusted, so disliked and so admired by his fellow countrymen."[8] But, as Colville also remarked, and rightly, "He was as strange a mixture of radical and traditionalist as could anywhere be found. He was certainly not conservative by temperament, nor indeed by conviction a supporter of the Conservative Party. On the other hand . . . he disliked the abolition of anything which had colour and tradition behind it."[9] And it is to Colville that we owe the priceless story of how, when he announced that he was going to join the Royal Air Force, Churchill's main concern was that he could take "your man" with him, the idea of going to war without one's personal valet being an unthinkable sacrifice.[10] Of course, his detractors quote this to demonstrate how appallingly out of touch Churchill was, but it was part of that style which Isaiah Berlin has immortalized in his superb *Mr. Churchill in 1940*, as "riding in triumph through Persepolis."[11]

To the end he remained a highly controversial personality, much hated as well as much revered. I vividly recall a newsreel of his eightieth birthday celebration in Westminster Hall being booed in an Oxford cinema in 1954, and a startlingly large number who were quite unmoved by his

[6] Quoted in Rhodes James, *Churchill: A Study in Failure, 1900–1939*, 287.
[7] Private discussion with Lord Boothby, also reflected in his *Reflections of a Rebel* (London: Hutchinson, 1978).
[8] John Colville, *The Fringes of Power* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1985), 124.
[9] Ibid., 128.
[10] J. Wheeler-Bennett, ed., *Action This Day* (London: Macmillan, 1968), 60.
[11] Isaiah Berlin, *Mr. Churchill in 1940* (London: John Murray, 1964), 17.

death and magnificent funeral, putting down the emotion to nostalgia and sentimental memories of our imperial past.

CHURCHILL'S ROMANTIC VIEW

There was something in the last criticism. Churchill's romantic view of the British and their history now gets short shrift from most professional historians, but how many of them could have written, or conceivably have written, anything like his account of the Battle of Blenheim in his biography of Marlborough? And what politician of our times could have called a defeated nation to arms and exhilaration by reminding them of the triumphs of their ancestors? Oddly enough, only Hitler and Mussolini and the Japanese leaders. Thus Wellington's soldiers and Nelson's sailors fought against Moltke's Uhlans and the Roman legions. This is one aspect of the Second World War that has always fascinated me. When the *Bismarck* was sunk, the victorious British admiral cabled the Admiralty: "She fought to the end in the great traditions of the German Imperial Navy." And Churchill himself greatly admired and respected the German soldier, with his own traditions. I have always thought it significant that he found it difficult to accept the cold-blooded bestiality of the German killing machine, in which the Wehrmacht was more deeply involved than we realized, until the evidence was overwhelming. Even then, he differentiated between "the Narzees" and the ordinary German, not comprehending, or wanting to comprehend, the extent of the war guilt.

Similarly, remembering the gallant *poilus* of the First World War, and recalling the valor of Napoleon's armies, he was wholly unprepared for the collapse of the French armies and their commanders in 1940. "Thank God for the French Army!" had been his prewar cry. He had also convinced himself that the days of the tank—very much his own brainchild—and the submarine were over, and that modern warships had nothing to fear from aircraft. As with his romantic opinion of the heroic French army, these opinions had to be swiftly revised, but not before near catastrophe.

A MAN OF WAR AND PEACE

It is inevitable that Churchill is thought of principally as a man of war. Indeed, much of his life had been devoted both to the study of war and to involvement in it, from a subaltern on the northwest frontier of India

to leadership of his country in the greatest war in history. From the Malakand Field Force to Korea, with two world wars thrown in, from a cavalry charge at Omdurman to thermonuclear weapons—this is quite a span. From this fascination with war to being called a "warmonger" was a very short step, and many crossed it—particularly in the awful 1930s, when the British were petrified by the mere thought of another European war, and wanted to listen to those who told them that it was impossible, and did not want to hear someone telling them that unless they rearmed on a massive scale it was inevitable. Even an admirer and friend, Alan Herbert, wrote of Munich, "I did think that he [Churchill] rather enjoyed a war; and, after three years in the infantry, in Gallipoli and France, I did not. I wanted Mr. Chamberlain to be right, and keep the peace successfully. I voted sadly for Munich: and the whole thing made me ill."[12]

But Churchill, as Paul Addison has reminded us,[13] was also a peacetime minister and politician. Indeed, he was considerably longer in office in peacetime than in war, and held all the major domestic ministries, a simple fact that tends to be overlooked. In his first period in politics he could almost be described as a pacifist, so strong were his denunciations of military expenditure. His closest political ally after he had joined the Liberals in 1904 was Lloyd George, who had courageously opposed the South African War, and who was then in his fiercest Radical period. Churchill was against spending money on dreadnoughts and for spending it on social reform. As Addison has written, "He was the principal driving force behind the Liberal welfare reforms of 1908–11, both at the Board of Trade and as Home Secretary," yet there were many who were skeptical about the depth of his commitment, even Violet Bonham Carter expressing doubts about his sincerity;[14] but, although it is always dangerous to try to affix political labels to this exceptional man, he was not the son of the populist Tory Democrat Lord Randolph for nothing, and his speeches in this period have a fire and sincerity. Deeply influenced by what he had seen in Germany, Churchill appointed the young William Beveridge to examine the possibility of labor exchanges, which he then introduced. He was also one of the pioneers of national insurance, and, had he been reelected in 1945, would have introduced the national health

[12] A. P. Herbert, *Independent Member* (London: Methuen, 1950), 109.
[13] Paul Addison, "Churchill and Social Reform," in *Churchill*, ed. Blake and Louis, 57–78.
[14] Violet Bonham Carter, *Winston Churchill as I Knew Him* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode and Collins, 1965), 161.

service. As Addison has nicely put it, "He saw it as the duty of his class, and hence of the state, to protect the weak and the poor."

THE ARISTOCRAT AND SOCIAL REFORM

David Cannadine and other critics have placed excessive emphasis on the fact that Churchill was an aristocrat.[15] The fact was that he was a very poor one, who throughout his life had to earn his own living by his own endeavors and abilities; if he demanded a high standard of living, he worked for it, and admired others who did the same.

This is an important, and often underestimated, point.

British politics have always been, and in many respects still remain, a rich man's occupation. When one looks at the British prime ministers of this century it is striking how many were independently rich, or certainly were comfortably well-off. Churchill was envious of Balfour's lack of concern for mundane matters of family finance, but the same could be said of every other major Conservative politician—and many Labour and Liberal—Anthony Eden being an outstanding exception, another point of common interest between them.

Churchill's sympathy for, and action on behalf of, the unfortunate and poor is now unhappily derided in my country by some Conservatives as "paternalism," "wetness," and "gutless Keynesianism." The new god is something called "market forces," when in reality it is a return to Victorian laissez-faire liberalism. The world in which Churchill grew up may have been one of the British Empire at its apogee, but it was also one in which the child mortality statistics for Belfast were worse than those for Calcutta, and where both in town and country there was desperate poverty. The young Churchill read, with horror, the reports of Seebohm Rowntree and others about urban squalor and destitution, which in the English countryside, after the terrible agricultural slump of the 1870s and 1880s, he could see for himself. He also saw the tragedy of old people like his beloved nurse, Everest, ill-rewarded in their lives and left to die in total poverty. The institution, by Lloyd George and Churchill, of the basics of a state pension fund was an achievement he always looked back upon with pride—and rightly so.

But there was also unquestionably a strong element of political calculation in his approach, as there had been in his father's. He knew that

[15] David Cannadine, "The Pitfalls of Family Piety," in *Churchill*, ed. Blake and Louis, 9–20.

if people were not given work, decent living conditions, and opportunities they would seize them for themselves. The French Revolution had been a nasty shock for British Conservatives; the revolutions of 1848 that had swept Europe and deposed many monarchies had been perhaps even nastier for the established order. With considerable skill Disraeli had transformed the Conservative Party into the party of constitutional and social reform; Lord Randolph took it even further, as did his son.

Charles Masterman wrote of Churchill during this period that "He desired in England a state of things where a benign upper class dispensed benefits to an industrious, *bien pensant*, and grateful working class";[16] there was some truth in this barbed comment, but although Churchill accepted the need for social reform to preserve established institutions, there was more to it than that. It is true that, as Violet Bonham Carter has written, "Though he had supported himself by his own tireless industry he was not acquainted with poverty," and that as a radical social reformer "He was—quite unconsciously—wearing fancy-dress, that he was not himself";[17] yet the actual record is more in Churchill's favor. There is also a certain charming naïveté in him. He enjoyed the good things in life, and wanted others to do so as well, provided that they did not fight him for them. He had much better relations with trade unionists than is often realized, but once he got into a battle he was determined to win it—until his last government, when something close to domestic appeasement became government policy.

As Isaiah Berlin and others—notably Leo Amery—have remarked, Churchill's views on most matters changed very little in his long lifetime,[18] and this is particularly ironic in view of the frequent charges of inconsistency and opportunism flung at him throughout his political career. In his social reform phase, which ended abruptly when he went to the Admiralty in 1911, he was very careful to distance himself from socialism and socialist measures, most vehemently in his election address at the 1908 Dundee by-election. "The cause of the Liberal Party is the cause of the left-out millions" was a call for a more humane system of society, not its transformation into a centralized state.[19] (Lloyd George was equally emphatic, comparing socialism with sand that gets everywhere and clogs

[16] Rhodes James, *Churchill: A Study in Failure, 1900–1939*, 35.
[17] Bonham Carter, *Winston Churchill as I Knew Him*, 164.
[18] Leo Amery, *My Political Life*, 2 vols. (London: Hutchinson, 1955), vol. 2, 510.
[19] Robert Rhodes James, ed., *The Complete Speeches of Sir Winston Churchill*, 8 vols. (New York: Chelsea House/Bowker, 1974), vol. 1, 1025–35.